

["Charley" Saum]

W15030

1 Conn. 1938-9 Saum

"Charley" Saum:

"Still writin' about knifemakers? Why don't you go over here to the high school graduation exercises tonight and tell 'em some of the things you've learned about the knife business? That ought to counteract some of the hot air that'll be served to those kids tonight about the golden opportunities ahead. Tell 'em how trades are disappearin' instead of gettin' more plentiful. Somebody oughta tell 'em the truth.

"I hear they're all gonna get jobs though. I hear they want 'em all to go down to the clock shop and be interviewed. The ones that show promise will be put to work. And some more of the old fellas will be laid off. They need the kids these days, because they're fast— and they'll work cheap. When they get too smart—throw 'em out and get some more. Great system ain't it? It's enough to make you sick.

"Few years ago they used to take 'em and make errand boys out of 'em for a while, and then put 'em on the bench and have some experienced man take 'em in hand and make clockmakers out of 'em. Now they start right in on some machine or doin' some operation that calls for fast work, and they're better at it than fellas that've been there for years because they got youth and speed. But them kids that are goin' in there now, they'll suffer for it, you wait and see. Workin' at top speed day in and day out a few years 'll burn 'em out, you wait and see. They can do it now because they're young, but they won't last forever.

"That new school's a dandy, ain't it? You been through it yet? I was through it the other day, and say, it certainly is a dandy. But one thing struck my mind—here they've gone

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and built 2 that big school because there ain't room enough in the old one—and they ain't figgerin' ahead at all. They tell you enrollment is fallin' off in the lower grades—less kids every year. And the only reason why the high school enrollment has been up the last few years is on account of business conditions. Kids are stayin' in school because there ain't no jobs for 'em.

“Now what I was thinkin'—in a few years time say business picks up again, the kids will be leavin' as soon as they're old enough to get jobs. Then where are they gonna be with their new school? They'll be payin' for a white elephant, that's what they'll be doin'. I ain't sayin' it ain't a beautiful piece of work, because it sure is. It's a dandy. But I think they'll find out some day it's bigger's what they need.

“There's one damn good thing about it, though, is that cookin' room for the girls. Best thing they coulda done. Most all of them girls'll get married soon's they're a year or two outa school. And the way it is now, halfa them don't know a damn thing about cookin'. Ruin a man's stomach before they learn anything. It's a good thing to teach 'em, believe me. Best thing I ever see in a school.

“Well, they're all out for their summer vacation, and I bet this is about the first year any of 'em ever felt sorry school was over. I bet they can hardly wait to get into that new school, especially the gymnasium. They don't know how lucky they are, at that. When I think of the little old shacks we used to go to school in years ago. No air condition, and no showers and gymnasium and auditorium and the like of that. Old iron stove for heat in the winter time, if you sat near the back of the room you damn near froze. Some ways things are better and some ways they're worse. I wonder what they'll be like when these kids gettin' outa school 3 tonight are my age? Well, it won't make much difference to me. I don't suppose more's five outa the whole class'll live that long. I's eighty-two years old.”